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IS YOUR SHABBOS MODE KOSHER?

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Appliances on Shabbos have been part of the educated Shabbos observers' consciousness for as long as appliances were being used. The first refrigerator to see widespread use was the General Electric "Monitor-Top" refrigerator introduced in 1927. The halachic responsa on this topic started shortly thereafter making almost 100 years of discussions.



As appliances got more complex, so did the Shabbos related challenges. In response, manufacturers began building "Shabbos Mode" directly into the appliance software. Right before Rosh Hashana in 1998 The Whirlpool Corporation was granted the first US Patent for a Sabbath mode. This allowed the Shabbos observant community to use these appliances, comfortable that all the Shabbos issues were satisfactorily taken care of. Since then, many manufacturers have filed their own patents for many inventions relating to Sabbath observance in appliance use.

The prevalence of appliances with Shabbos mode has led to the issues surrounding appliances slipping from even well-educated Shabbos observers' active consciousness. However, consumers must remain vigilant, both with properly using the Shabbos modes themselves and with specific rulings from their own rav about the Shabbos Modes.

First, not all Shabbos modes have a hechsher. The owner's manual showing you how to use the Shabbos mode does not mean that it is certified at all. With all the additional technology incorporated into appliances, an uncertified appliance is, in many cases, more problematic than the appliance without any Shabbos mode you may have grown up using. Although your rav may have permitted some appliances to



be used as is without any Shabbos mode in the past, this may not apply to your current appliance.

Secondly, each Shabbos mode may have specific conditions from the certifier under which the appliance may be used on Shabbos. It is imperative to check the certifier's information for how to use the Shabbos mode properly. This can include manually disabling the ice-maker or setting the light in an oven to stay on the whole Shabbos.¹ In an oven this may also include specific instructions on what you may or may not be allowed to do while the oven is in Shabbos Mode. More on this later.

The Star-K and the OU maintain lists on their websites of the specific models they certify as well as specific guidelines and alerts for the models they certify.

►
Whirlpool
Corporation
first US Patent
for a Sabbath
mode

United States Patent [19] Moon et al.



US005808278A

[11] Patent Number: **5,808,278**
[45] Date of Patent: **Sep. 15, 1998**

[54] ELECTRONIC APPLIANCE AND A SABBATH MODE THEREFOR

[75] Inventors: **Chang Hwan Moon**, Dayton;
Jonathan T. Smith, Beavercreek, both
of Ohio

[73] Assignee: **Whirlpool Corporation**, Benton
Harbor, Mich.

[21] Appl. No.: **742,188**

[22] Filed: **Oct. 31, 1996**

4,031,435	6/1977	Zioni et al.	361/186
4,071,116	1/1978	Halperin et al.	187/29
4,198,576	4/1980	Stalon	307/141.3
4,363,944	12/1982	Poirier	200/42 R
4,375,583	3/1983	Halperin et al.	179/90
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4,513,189	4/1985	Ueda et al.	219/10.55
4,611,295	9/1986	Fowler	364/184
4,814,588	3/1989	Hotta et al.	219/492
4,819,714	4/1989	Otsuka et al.	165/12
5,299,113	3/1994	England et al.	364/140

Primary Examiner—Mark H. Paschall

1. Occasionally these are not controlled by the main computer and cannot be disabled with the general Shabbos Mode.

These instructions are not to be taken lightly as there may be more to them than meets the eye. I would like to delve into one instruction in particular. Almost all Star-K certified ovens have the following instruction, “On the Sabbath, the oven door may only be opened once, all the food removed, and then closed.” This instruction is on almost all Star-K certified models² but not for the same reason.

This point is often misunderstood. In the past, the common discussion about opening and closing an oven on Shabbos concerned a thermostat cycling the heat on and off. The concern was that when the oven door was opened the cool air entering would cause the oven temperature to drop and the internal thermostat, sensing the cooler internal temperature, would turn the flame back on or keep it on for longer until the temperature returned to the desired temperature. This question of a thermostat cycling the appliance on and off is in halachic responsa for almost 100 years. On the question of the thermostat, some Rabbonim were stringent and some were lenient. The Star-K follows the stringent opinion that only allows for an oven door to be opened at a time when the flame is no longer needed. This would be when one is removing all the food. However, there are those who disagree and rule that one may open and close an oven on Shabbos even if one intends to leave food inside.³

Many reading this instruction from the Star-K that all the food must be removed will assume that because their rabbi has told them that they can follow the lenient opinion, they can ignore this instruction.

However, on many models there is an additional and more severe concern than the thermostat. Even those who were lenient regarding thermostats would agree that it is prohibited in this case. The reason for this is the addition of the door switch being connected to the heating of the oven.

Many ovens have a door switch that detects if the door is open or closed.

Sometimes this is only used to turn the interior light on and off. This can also be used for other oven functions. One of the additional functions of the door switch on many ovens is that once the door is open for about 30 seconds the flame or electric heating element will go off; this is for safety and efficiency. Once the oven door is closed, the flame or heating element will turn back on. On these ovens opening and closing the door directly makes the heat go off and on. Whereas the thermostat turning the flame on was indirect and separate from the direct action of opening the oven door, on these models this somewhat inconspicuous physical button is being manipulated with the door each time it is opened and closed. When one closes the oven door, one is using the oven door to push a button that is turning the heating back on. This is obviously a concern regarding Shabbos; one may not use a button to turn an oven on or off during Shabbos.

The obvious question is how in Shabbos mode, is this feature dealt with? There are some Shabbos Modes that disable the door entirely. These are the Star-K’s “New Shabbos Mode” and GE’s OU certified “Enhanced Shabbos Mode.” However, the most common Shabbos mode on ovens is the Star-K regular Shabbos Mode. On these ovens with such a door switch, the flame will continue to go on and off when the door is closed and opened even in Shabbos mode. However, the regular Shabbos Mode adds a delay where the door switch only completes the intended action after a built-in time-delay runs its course.

Their *posek* has ruled that when one pushes a button, there is no discernable immediate change and the effects are only discernable later; it is a *grama*. However, even a *grama* is not allowed on Shabbos for a beneficial action. Therefore, the Star-K writes “On the Sabbath, the oven door may only be opened once, all the food removed...” Once all food is removed there is no benefit in the flame going back on. However, if one were to



A door switch detects if the door is opened or closed

leave food in the oven for later, the turning on of the oven when the door is closed serves a purpose to keep the remaining food warm and this is forbidden on Shabbos even with the built-in delay. Those who were lenient about closing the oven door on Shabbos when the only concern was the thermostat, would not be lenient to close the oven door with food inside when there is a door switch that will turn the heating on.

I have spoken to many people who have checked their ovens and were dismayed to learn that their oven had a door switch turning the flame off and on with each opening and closing of the oven door. This can be easily missed for many years if one is not paying attention. Before relying on the original ruling that one may leave food in the oven when closing the door on Shabbos it is prudent to check your model and see if there is a door switch that will make that prohibited on Shabbos.

Beyond the specifics of how particular ovens operate, one broader point remains: **Even when a Shabbos mode is reliably certified and used according to the certifier’s instructions, it reflects the halachic rulings of the certifier’s rav.**

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2. Ovens with the “New Shabbos Mode” will not have this instruction.

3. Some of the lenient opinions require only opening the oven door when the flame is currently burning.



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One should therefore consult their own rav to determine what is appropriate for them.

Many rabbonim disagree with the Star-K that adding a delay after one presses a button before the action happens makes it a *grama*. This has two important implications. The first is that one may not open and close an oven door that has a door switch that is turning the flame off and on even with a delay. The second implication is that some Shabbos modes include instructions for pushing buttons to change the oven temperature on Yom Tov. This too relies on the built-in time-delay being a halachic *grama*. Those that dispute this maintain that it is prohibited to use buttons on any oven to change the temperature on Yom Tov.

In conclusion it is important to know that your specific model is certified,⁴ what the Shabbos mode certifier says the Shabbos mode allows, and it is also important to consult your own rav to know what you should be doing in your own home.

If your appliance doesn't have a Shabbos mode or your rav says to disable the door switch in addition to the Shabbos mode, here is what you need to do:

- (a) Locate the door switch. On an oven this will be a visible button on the face of the oven where the door would meet the oven when closed.
- (b) Place a magnet⁵ to keep the door switch fully engaged over Shabbos.⁶ This will make the appliance sense the door is closed even when it is open.⁷ ■



Magnet to keep oven door switch fully engaged over Shabbos can be purchased at <https://ebay.io/m/OK8cmn>

4. This can be challenging for older GE models as GE no longer works with their original certifier and these are no longer searchable on the Star-K website.

5. Whirlpool was awarded a patent for a device that will keep the door switch physically depressed for Shabbos. However, I do not believe this device was ever brought to market.

6. An important note from the experts: Ovens can usually operate efficiently with the door switch always pressed in (some materials may not survive the high heat of the self-cleaning cycle and will need to be removed beforehand). Fridges on the other hand are engineered to rely upon the input from the switch and should not remain with the switch pressed in the entire week.

7. The oven will only turn the heating on when the thermostat calls for heat. One should follow their Rav's ruling what to do on such an oven regarding leaving food inside.